

Testimony of Dr. James T. McHugh, Ph.D. before the House Higher Education Committee  
Rep. Tom Young, Chair, May 13, 2023

Chair Young, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

I am James T. McHugh, a Professor of Political Science and Fellow of the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron, where I have served for 14 years in various capacities as a teacher and administrator. I am submitting testimony in opposition to Substitute House Bill 151 as a citizen of Ohio and not as an official representative of my university. I have been a student, scholar, and professor for nearly 40 years at various institutions in the United States and abroad, witnessing the best practices of the finest institutions of higher education America and around the world. Based upon my deep and broad experience and expertise, I can inform this committee, with absolute certainty, that HB 151 will have a devastating effect upon higher education institutions in Ohio, their students, and the future of the state. In addition to the testimony of various other experts who oppose this bill, I would like to bring to the committee's attention other devastating consequences that this bill will cause:

- 1) Tenure does not only protect academic freedom. The undermining of tenure proposed by this bill will destroy faculty governance, which has been the source of academic excellence for centuries. Otherwise, universities will lack the governing expertise to fulfill their mission with success.
- 2) Undermining tenure will put the accreditation of Ohio public universities at risk. It also will permanently damage the academic rankings and reputation of these institutions, resulting in declining enrollment, diminished research and development that these institutions produce, a notable decline in the intellectual capital of Ohio, and a severe loss of prestige for the state.
- 3) Academic careers are not financially lucrative. High quality candidates pursue careers in higher education because of the academic freedom it provides to prepare new generations of students to become successful professionals and engaged citizens. Eliminating protections to academic freedom and careers will strongly discourage Ohio residents from pursuing academic careers and make it very difficult, over the long term, to attract professors, researchers, and other career professionals to Ohio public universities.
- 4) These outcomes will accelerate the "brain drain" that already has been noted within Ohio. Its brightest young people will opt to pursue their higher education and subsequent careers in other regions of the country. Additionally, students from other American states and other countries will not be attracted to Ohio institutions of higher education, thus exacerbating the declining enrollments that demographic pressures already have caused.
- 5) Cultural values are instilled into Ohio children and adolescents by their families and communities. As they become young adults, those values will remain with them. Colleges and universities are not, and never have been, substitutes for the formative influences of these families and communities. HB 151 will not inoculate students from forming values that are at odds with those formative experiences. Instead, it will merely undermine their futures as productive professionals and citizens and make it more likely that they will seek that development outside Ohio. Therefore, HB 151 will have devastating effects upon the quality and viability of higher education in Ohio with long-term consequences that will defeat its own purpose for the state and its people.

I urge you to reject this bill and I thank you for your attention to my testimony.